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Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5117th meeting

Friday, 28 January 2005, 4.10 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mrs. Patterson

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (S/2005/36)

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05-22263 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (S/2005/36)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Lebanon, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Assaf (Lebanon), took a seat at the Council table.

The President (spoke in Spanish): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2005/36, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Members also have before them document S/2005/53, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Denmark, France, Greece, Romania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I should also like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to documents S/2005/13, S/2005/23, S/2005/24, S/2005/25, S/2005/26, which contain letters from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, and documents S/2005/14 and S/2005/40, containing letters from the Permanent Representative of Israel.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no vote, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, China, Denmark, France, Greece, Japan, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1583 (2005).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council that wish to take the floor after the vote.

Mr. Duclos (France) (spoke in French): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of the resolution. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) makes an indispensable contribution to stability and security in the region. The persistence of violent incidents and violations along the length of the Blue Line underlines the importance of UNIFIL's presence on the ground.

That resurgence of violence has grave consequences, including, recently, the death of a French officer serving the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

We condemn the use of violence. We call on the parties to exercise the utmost restraint. We also condemn all violations of the Blue Line, whether by land or by air. It is the responsibility of the parties to take the necessary measures to ensure respect for the Blue Line in its entirety and to prevent all violations. The Blue Line remains the agreed reference for the international community.

To that end, and in conformity with the constant demands of the Security Council, Lebanon must re-establish its authority in the south, in particular by deploying its armed forces and disarming the militias. At a time when there are encouraging prospects with regard to resuming the peace process in the Middle East, everything must be done to move towards stability in the region.

Mrs. Patterson (United States of America): The United States voted in favour of the resolution supporting the extension of the present mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) through the end of July 2005. We agree with the

Security Council that UNIFIL continues to play a critical role in attempting to maintain stability in southern Lebanon, and we feel that this resolution reflects the continued concern of the international community about the persistent sources of instability in the area. We reiterate that the interests of both sides are served by peace and security along the Blue Line, and we urge again that calm and restraint prevail in the area.

The Secretary-General has affirmed that UNIFIL has essentially completed two of its three mandates, with the one remaining mandate being the restoration of international peace and security. We remain concerned by what the Secretary-General termed the disturbing activities of Hizbullah in the area. As we saw with the incidents of 9 and 17 January, which resulted in the unfortunate loss of life on both sides of the Blue Line -- including one United Nations military observer, a French national — Hizbullah remains a persistent source of violence and an obstacle to the fulfilment of that final mandate.

Yet the Lebanese Government continues to condone Hizbullah operations launched from its territory, even those that show a complete disregard for the Blue Line. As the Secretary-General's recent report on UNIFIL operations reaffirms, the continually asserted position of the Government of Lebanon — that the Blue Line is not valid in the Shab'a farms area — is not compatible with Security Council resolutions and, in any case, is no excuse for allowing Hizbullah to engage in violence along and across the Blue Line.

Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the Government of Lebanon to fully extend and exercise its sole and effective authority over all its territory up to the Blue Line, consistent with numerous Security Council resolutions. As was evidenced by the rocket attacks launched from Lebanese territory by rogue elements last October and November, the failure of the Lebanese Government to deploy its armed forces in sufficient numbers to ensure a calm environment throughout the area poses a grave threat to peace and security there.

Again, we believe that UNIFIL continues to serve an important purpose, yet we feel that the continued spectre of armed militias in southern Lebanon, coupled with the Lebanese Government's unwillingness to assert its sole and effective control over all its territory, are the greatest impediments to UNIFIL's expeditiously fulfilling its final mandate of restoring peace and security along the Blue Line.

It is the policy of the United States Government to ensure that United States persons participating in United Nations peace operations, including members of the armed services of the United States of America, are protected from criminal prosecution or other assertion of jurisdiction by the International Criminal Court. If United States persons were involved, the United States would seek express provisions providing protection for United States persons from countries hosting any mission established or authorized by the Security Council.

The United States does not have any persons serving in UNIFIL, however, and has agreed not to seek such express provisions in this case.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Algeria joined other members of the Security Council in voting in favour of the draft resolution on renewing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It did so once the concerns it had expressed had largely been taken into account by the country that prepared the original text, and I should like to thank that delegation for the flexibility it demonstrated.

Negotiations turned out to be rather difficult because of efforts to introduce political elements which, we feel, were not appropriate in a text of this nature.

Algeria, which attaches the greatest importance to UNIFIL's continued mission in Lebanon and to the integrity of its mandate, would like to recall that only Israel's full withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied by force — namely Palestinian territory, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif; the Syrian Golan; and Shaba'a Farms — can lead to a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): Together with other delegations, we voted in favour of the draft resolution just adopted. Brazil fully supports the important role being played by UNIFIL in southern Lebanon, in conformity with its mandate, as established by resolution 425 (1978), of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area, and restoring international peace and security.

We encourage the Secretary-General, in preparing his recommendations with regard to reviewing the mandate and structures of UNIFIL, as envisaged in operative paragraph 11, appropriately to take into consideration, inter alia, the opinions and views of the Lebanese Government in this matter.

My delegation is gravely concerned at the persistence of tensions, hostile rhetoric and skirmishes — some with deadly consequences — which characterize the situation along the Blue Line. We regret the fact that such events are continuing to take place notwithstanding the repeated appeals made by the Council and by the Secretary-General and his representatives in that regard.

We call on both parties fully to comply with the provisions contained in resolution 425 (1978) and subsequent Council resolutions. We expect Israel fully to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon by ceasing its recurrent incursions into Lebanese airspace, which have proved to entail clear destabilizing and provocative effects.

For its part, the Government in Beirut must do more to exert effective authority and control over the southern part of its territory as well as to reassess its positions regarding the deployment of its forces along the line of withdrawal. We also call on both parties to comply with their obligations in ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel. They must do their utmost to prevent the recurrence of incidents such as that of 9 January last.

We take this opportunity to convey once again our solidarity to France and Sweden and to the concerned families for the death and injury caused to two of their nationals. As the Secretary-General remarks in his latest report, Israel and Lebanon have been stressing their desire to avoid confrontation. We urge both of them to live up to those aspirations.

Brazil is genuinely committed to the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We expect the parties, with the support of the international community, to take advantage of the present opportunities and to sustain this favourable momentum.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Japan attaches great importance to the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and welcomes the adoption of the resolution to renew its mandate for another six months.

The Japanese delegation has paid particular attention to two points, namely, the ninth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 7. With regard to the ninth preambular paragraph, Japan believe that, thanks to extensive discussions and valuable contributions by the members of the Council, we were able to agree on well-balanced language that reflects decisions taken by the Security Council in the past.

With regard to operative paragraph 11, Japan, as one of the largest financial contributors to peacekeeping operation activities, upholds the basic position that all peacekeeping missions should be under constant review with regard to their mandates and structures, particularly in the light of the rising demand for, and the changing character of, peacekeeping operations in the world. The need for review applies to UNIFIL as well. In the light of UNIFIL's importance, we consider this paragraph to be appropriate in order to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Since its inception, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has played an important role in maintaining stability in the region. We appreciate the efforts it has undertaken.

In keeping with the Secretary-General's recommendation, and at the request of the Lebanese Government, we support the adoption by the Security Council of a technical resolution to extend UNIFIL's mandate for a further six months. We are grateful to all sides for the constructive spirit manifested during the consultations on the draft resolution.

Even though the text is still not entirely satisfactory, the Chinese delegation, bearing in mind the overall situation, voted in favour of the draft resolution.

We would like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to appeal once again to the parties concerned effectively to implement their commitments, fully respect the Blue Line, exercise the utmost restraint, and jointly maintain peace and stability along the borders.

The relationship between Israel and Palestine has witnessed some improvement. The peace process in the Middle East is moving in a positive direction. As the

question of Lebanon and Israel is an important part in the peace process in the Middle East, we hope that both parties will seize the opportunity to expeditiously resume their talks on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace, strive to reach consensus and achieve a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East at an early date.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in French*): Russia voted in favour of the draft resolution on extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Throughout the history of these forces, mandates have always been voted on unanimously, and we did not wish to break with that tradition or to create a precedent of deviating from the principle of unanimously voting on mandates for United Nations missions.

We would like to note, however, that the decision taken by the Security Council is not fully satisfactory to us. We believe that the resolution is too politicized and that it is geared not so much to enhancing the nature of the United Nations operation in southern Lebanon, but rather to bringing pressure to bear on Beirut and obliging it to endeavour to resolve questions that — because of objective reasons and because of the overall situation in the Middle East — it simply cannot resolve.

In an attempt to make the resolution less politicized, we introduced a number of amendments to try to make it more balanced when it was under consideration at the expert level. During the recent consultations on the draft resolution, we made a further effort to try to introduce a small change that we felt would have made it more balanced. Unfortunately, our suggestions were not accepted.

The current mandate of UNIFIL is fully acceptable to Russia. We see no reason to change it. But when we discuss reviewing the mandate and structure of UNIFIL, we believe that we should rely on the experience of the Secretary-General and on his understanding and reading of the situation in the region. Of course, we would expect him to take account of the views and opinions of the Lebanese Government.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our view that solving the problems in southern Lebanon will be impossible unless there is a comprehensive Middle East settlement covering all tracks. Without Syria and Lebanon, it will not be possible to achieve a solid peace in the region, based on the well-known Security Council resolutions — 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003) — the Madrid principles, the land-for-peace formula and the Arab peace initiative approved in 2002 at the Beirut Summit of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): The Security Council has just adopted resolution 1583 (2005), extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for another six months. I would like to emphasize the cooperative spirit that prevailed during its preparation. The unanimous adoption proves the Council's feeling that the situation that continues to prevail on the ground is still threatening peace and security in the area.

There is one element the resolution about which we would like to express some thoughts. It is well understood that the increased number of peacekeeping operations worldwide, with an ever-expanding range of activities to be carried out, has created an urgent need to review the structures of current peacekeeping operations so as to achieve greater operational efficiency through the utilization of limited resources. The review of peacekeeping operations should nevertheless be carried out in accordance with objective criteria and the existing conditions on the ground and should be defined by factors of substance after assessment of the risks involved in each specific situation. Needless to say, the opinion and views of the host country play an important role and should be taken into consideration appropriately.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Argentina.

Argentina voted in favour of the resolution. We believe the fact that it was adopted unanimously is very significant, as that represents important support for continuity in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). That Force must continue to contribute to restoring peace and security in the region.

My country attaches great importance to the efforts being made by UNIFIL to preserve the ceasefire along the Blue Line, resolve incidents and prevent acts of violence. Given the importance attached to this matter, we are gratified that on this occasion the

Council adopted the resolution unanimously. We believe that text was developed in a favourable manner during negotiations over the past few days.

I would like to recall that just a few weeks ago the Security Council expressed its concern about the violence that had developed along the Blue Line, in particular as a result of the incidents on 9 January. Those incidents clearly demonstrate that there is a real risk of escalating violence and reprisals that could have destabilizing repercussions throughout the region.

My country is particularly concerned that, despite a period of relative calm along the Blue Line, tension between the parties remains very high. Argentina reiterates its appeal to the parties to act with the utmost prudence and self-restraint and to put an end to violations of the Blue Line, while complying fully with their obligations under resolution 425 (1978) and other pronouncements by the Security Council.

Despite the positive influence of UNIFIL's presence on the ground, we must not forget that, as stated in operative paragraph 8 of the resolution, Israel and Lebanon bear the primary responsibility for maintaining the ceasefire and respecting the withdrawal line. Argentina supports the Lebanese Government's efforts, and we will continue to provide support for any measures to promote security in this area.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the situation in southern Lebanon must be examined within a broader, regional context. There can be no doubt that what is happening there has an impact throughout UNIFIL's area of operation. Argentina would therefore like to recall once again the importance of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in keeping with resolutions to 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003).

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Lebanon very much appreciates the efforts and the sacrifices that have been made by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to secure peace and security in the region. The Lebanese Government would like to underscore the importance that it attaches to UNIFIL and to the fact that UNIFIL must remain in place, carrying out its tasks in keeping with resolution 425 (1978), without any review or change whatsoever.

The Government of Lebanon believes that it would have been desirable to draft a technical resolution to extend UNIFIL's mandate without selectively highlighting passages from the Secretary-General's report and without introducing any political elements into the resolution. Those elements could have a detrimental effect on peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.